Our whole school trip to the Melbourne zoo was a wonderful success. This rare opportunity to have a whole school excursion has been great for every one of our students and I look forward to working with each of the students in my class, discovering what their interests and passions are in connection with Asia. This term our enquiry unit (big project) is on Asia and the big question is “How can we make a good thing last in Asia and back home?” We are focusing on sustainability and the conservation of animals in Asia and at home in Australia. This topic gives our students plenty of scope to choose an animal which fascinates them from exotic Asia as well as an animal closer to home. Naturally, the text type that students will be studying is the information report and its overall structure and language features. At home you can support this by drawing your child’s attention to how non-fiction texts are structured, or put together. Draw their attention to the use of headings and subheadings. Point out the use of special vocabulary that the text uses. As always, we encourage your child to read a variety of texts in addition to the levelled texts provided by the school.

Don’t forget to use the school website as a springboard for online research if you have access to the Internet.

The Boite Chorus recently performed with great success at federation square. Will, Max M, Madison, Jess and Michaela participated from our class, and had a great time. Max and Will were keen to tell me how there is a great playground down there and that they had a good time running around. When asked about the chorus, Max said that he enjoyed singing in French, and that some schools were very good singers and entertaining. Jess loved singing to all the parents that came along. Michaela liked having such a big audience. Jess and Michaela liked singing with older kids because it is more fun and they can help you.

This term our class has been revising spelling patterns by using a word matching and sorting activity set that our school recently acquired. The word sorts are ranging in difficulty so that every student is revising strategies that are suited to their needs. While mastering frequent words is a valuable and necessary, the student’s whole vocabulary is far too large to cover with a shortlist of seven words each week. This is why we encourage our students to understand spelling strategies and skills that will support their learning for many years to come as they are exposed to thousands of words. You can support your child’s spelling by taking home some of these word-sorting activities. You could have them proof-read text that they write at home, such as letters and emails. You can play language games, such as Boggle, Upwords, Scrabble Jr. and whatever else you have access to. The school website has a link to SpellingCity where students can revise words that they are using in their writing.

In Maths we have been looking at various addition and multiplication strategies. Mastering addition and multiplication strategies helps tackle subtraction and division efficiently. We have a varied worksheet that the
students work at for seven minutes every morning. The students have enjoyed tracking their progress as they use more efficient strategies and memorised number facts to complete as much as they can. When the weather is tolerable we try to get out at the start of the day to do a variety of quick coordination and maths drills. These maths drills are often put into story questions and scenarios involving the school equipment and the school ground, such as the veggie patches. Putting maths into stories is helpful in developing their understanding of maths and how to apply what they have learnt. This is where you are in a good position at home to support their maths learning by asking them to help out in the kitchen with measuring or in the workshop with any safe projects. Encourage your child to handle money where possible, perhaps when shopping or purchasing small items. If you have a pocket money system at home, encourage your child to keep track of their savings and spending, as this will prepare them for handling their finances responsibly in the future. As money becomes more and more abstract with our plastic-card payments, it is important that children develop money sense through handling money where they can.

Please ensure that your child is returning their home-reading books to school so I can keep sending new texts to keep them engaged. Don’t forget that when children see you reading text for your own enjoyment, they get a clear message that reading is an important skill and pleasure for life.

I have been developing some maths games with dominos which are easily adapted to the abilities of different students so that they can play cooperatively while working on number skills. I hope to provide this resource on our website in the near future for download, and offer short-term borrowing from the class sets. Be sure to check out our website links to other maths resources.

Our school dance program has begun and it has kicked off with some groovy beats and moves. Our class is bopping to the classic, Walk the Dinosaur. Dancing is great for a range of reasons beyond just having a lot of fun and getting fit. It develops their procedural memory, which helps them learn all kinds of things from reading to tying their shoelaces. As the weeks go by, ask your child to show you some of the moves they’ve been busting out in dance classes.

We’ve had quite a bit of cold weather lately at our school so the students are often in at lunchtime enjoying passive games and activities. It is likely that the weather at home isn’t that flash either so take these opportunities to encourage your children to play games that involve turn-taking, perseverance and concentration. I’ve recently introduced a new game to the classroom called Solitaire Chess, created by Thinkfun. It’s a simple game, like peg solitaire, but it uses chess pieces instead of the regular pegs. Students use a lot of visualisation and procedural thinking skills. Please let me know if you have some great activities or applications that you think other students would benefit from as I’d love to check them out.

If you have any spare shoeboxes, could you put them aside for later this year, as come Christmas time, students use these to put Christmas crafts in and take them home.

Please contact me if you have any suggestions or questions about your child’s education. You are always welcome to come in, help out or just see how the day typically passes for them.

Kind regards,

Steven Hallam
Classroom teacher 1/2/3